

Fires Brigade TAB:

Expanded and Unique Missions in OIF

The new fires brigade target acquisition battery (TAB) has a diverse mission in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The TAB provides not only doctrinal counterfire radar operations, but also logistical and operational support, mobile training teams (MTTs) and new equipment training (NET) teams for all radar systems in the area of responsibility (AOR). It also provides meteorological (Met) data for the fires battalions.

A Battery, 26th Field Artillery (A/26 FA), a TAB in the 4th Fires Brigade, sup-

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ported organic radar sections on Camp Liberty, Iraq, and acted as a combat enabler for all counterfire radar systems in the Multi-National Division-Baghdad (MND-B). This included support for not only its Q-36 and Q-37 radars, but all radars in the MND-B's AOR—more than 20 systems.

The TAB's mission evolved from the traditional role of augmenting a division- or brigade-level fires and effects cell (FEC) into a multi-faceted, autonomous orga-

nization that can deploy in whole or in segments. It supports not only internal logistical operations for the battery, but also projects logistical and operational support forward for radars, including new systems, such as the lightweight counter-mortar radar (LCMR) and the unattended transient acoustic measurements and signatures intelligence (MASINT) sensor (UTAMS).

A/26 FA is the first operational TAB under the fires brigade organization to deploy to combat operations in OIF.

The Modern TAB: An Overview. The new TAB has two Q-37 radar sections and one each target processing, Profiler Met, supply and survey section plus one headquarters element with a maintenance team—in our case, from the 589th Brigade Support Battalion (BSB). The organic strength of the current TAB is 48 personnel.

A/26 FA deployed with a third Q-37 radar section from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 4th Infantry Division. It assumed control of this section while staging in Kuwait. During the deployment, A/26 FA also integrated two Q-36 radar sections from B/1-14 FA, 214th Fires Brigade, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. With that addition, the TAB's strength increased to 77 personnel.

A/26 FA fielded the Profiler section immediately before deploying and began operations once in theater. Met operations are conducted on a 24-hour basis for radar operations and to fulfill one of the five requirements for accurate predicted fires for the fires battalions organic to the division's BCTs.

Counterfire Ops. The TAB still performs the traditional FA mission of providing continuous target acquisition (TA) and counterfire radar coverage, in this case, for Camp Liberty and key areas within Baghdad. A/26 FA manned, trained, supplied and operated the radar sections on Camp Liberty and provided them access to the unit-level logistics system-ground (ULLS-G) and



A Q-37 radar set up in Iraq. The modern target acquisition battery (TAB) has two Q-37 radar sections and one each target processing, Profiler Met, supply and survey section plus one headquarters element with a maintenance team

ULLS-S4 without the need for external coordination, greatly increasing section operational readiness rates.

New Radars. When the Army fielded the LCMR and UTAMS, A/26 FA (TAB) led the NETs and MTTs throughout the MND-B.

The LCMR covers a wide array of fronts not only for small patrol bases or observation posts (OPs), but also for integrated defenses at larger forward operating bases (FOBs) and logistical support areas (LSAs). The LCMR covers areas subject to high volumes of mortar attacks. Consequently, the LCMR's readiness status and trained manning capability in Iraq were extremely important.

A/26 FA began preparing for this facet of its mission months before deploying to Iraq by training personnel at home-station and operator- and supervisor-level personnel in theater. The battery used personnel from Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) 13R Radar Operator and 13F Fire Support Specialist as primary operators and trainers.

The radar platoon sergeant was designated senior subject matter expert (SME). This enabled the operators/trainers to use current radar emplacement operations and techniques as a baseline for instruction on the new LCMR systems.

Fire support specialists were an obvious choice for operators/trainers. They were assigned primarily as combat patrol personnel and could deploy to a location, conduct LCMR operations and redeploy to Camp Liberty with minimal effect on radar operations at the camp.

The LCMR NET/MTT challenge was to get trainers and equipment to each location to enable units to maintain operations 24/7. The focus of this training was on hands-on application at the individual user level. The result was two weeks of training for four to eight Soldiers per LCMR location, to include key leaders and fire support supervisors. This focused on meeting the largest operational challenge of continually maintaining trained, experienced operators at patrol bases and OPs.

With trained personnel at all levels, accurate, responsive acquisitions from the LCMR can correlate or confirm acquisitions of other systems to validate indirect fires. Unit commanders used this data to employ various means to eliminate anti-Iraqi force (AIF) mortarmen. Intelligence analysts used the information for pattern analysis on weapons systems.

The UTAMS training and quality

assurance/quality control model that was implemented mirrored the LCMR model with senior SMEs provided by A/26. UTAMS was implemented as a secondary system that provided a listening post/OP to facilitate accurate point of origin (POO) and point of impact (POI) locations at smaller patrol bases and FOBs.

Radar Logistical Support. A/26 FA assumed logistical responsibility for all radar sections within MND-B. The battery had to become proficient in maintaining the large-scale essential repair parts supply list and managing the recommended integrated supply list plus conducting logistic patrols to deliver these essential parts and equipment.

Radar Inventory Management System. A/26 FA developed the radar inventory management system. This is a web-based system that enabled division counterfire officers and A/26 FA senior maintenance technicians to maintain visibility of all essential repair parts supply lists within MND-B. This increased parts flow to not-mission-capable (NMC) radars in the MND-B and allowed A/26 FA and the division counterfire cell to identify critical shortages ahead of "zero balance" reports.

The battery's logistical support node coordinated with outside agencies, such as the Communications and Electronics Command (CECOM), Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, and with local radars for critical Firefinder technical support as well as civilian field service representatives for new LCMRs fielded in theater.

Radar Parts by Air and Ground. A/26 FA integrated wheeled and air assets to move radar parts. With logistical patrols and through air movement using divisional organic aviation, parts and tools were delivered across the battlefield to resupply radar systems rapidly.

Although movement of parts by air assets proved to be the safest and most expedient, ground assets had to carry some of the burden. A/26 FA cross-trained survey, Met and target processing sections to perform not only their MOS-specific skills, but also to serve as combat convoy crews.

Radar Parts Team. Historically, radar sections are attached to distant units and (or) positioned away from their logistical support chains. This reduces their ability to order parts and manage document numbers effectively—a challenge for many radar sections in previous OIF deployments.

A/26 FA maximized the use of a main-

tenance team to order critical parts and tools on a daily basis. The team was augmented with a senior FA warrant officer (MOS 131A Radar Technician), who served as the senior master technician. His focus was quality assurance and quality control of radar parts flow and management.

Via the BSB, the team coordinated for critical parts to be shipped high priority from the continental US (CONUS), reducing downtime on critical radar systems. Having access to the prescribed load list (PLL), essential repair parts supply list and recommended integrated supply list management ensured that document numbers were validated and reordered when cancellations or drops occurred. This expedited requisitions and significantly reduced NMC time for MND-B radars. It resulted in a higher volume of acquisitions by systems throughout the AOR.

In a "typical day," A/26 FA supported several logistical patrols to transport critical personnel or equipment from locations ranging from LSA Anaconda to Kalsu and Abu Grahieb to Rustamiyah. Simultaneously, the battery command post (CP) coordinated for air and ground movement of parts to any number of locations within theater while an LCMR crew conducted on-site training and maintenance operations. This was while the battery manned and conducted TA operations in support of multiple locations within MND-B and provided Met support for division counterfire operations.

A/26 FA spent its tour in Iraq adapting and refining its operations to meet the ever-changing demands of MND-B and its radars. The many facets of A/26 FA's mission also are helping to define the role of the new fires brigade TAB in the Army's continuing campaign for Iraq's freedom.

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